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05 October 2018

Version of attached file:

Published Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Hofmann, Eric and Kohnen, Winfried (2018) 'Holomorphic derivatives of Siegel modular forms.', *Bulletin of the Korean Mathematical Society.*, 55 (5). pp. 1621-1625.

Further information on publisher's website:

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HOLOMORPHIC DERIVATIVES OF SIEGEL MODULAR FORMS

ERIC HOFMANN AND WINFRIED KOHNEN

ABSTRACT. In this paper, following a criterion of E. Yang and L. Yin [4] we discuss whether on the Siegel half-space of genus $g \geq 2$ a holomorphic derivative exists.

1. Introduction

Let

$$P(z) = 1 - 24 \sum_{n \geq 1} \sigma_1(n) e^{2\pi i n z}$$

be the “nearly modular” Eisenstein series of weight 2 on $\Gamma_1 := \mathrm{SL}_2(\mathbb{Z})$. Here z is in the complex upper half-plane \mathbb{H} and $\sigma_1(n) = \sum_{d|n} d$. Then, it is well-known that the “Serre-derivative”

$$f \mapsto \partial_k f := \frac{12}{2\pi i} f' - k P f$$

sends holomorphic modular forms of weight k on Γ_1 to those of weight $k+2$. The derivative ∂_k plays an important role in the classical theory of modular forms in one variable as well as in the corresponding p-adic theory. It is therefore a very natural and important question to ask whether ∂_k has a generalization to Siegel modular forms of genus $g \geq 2$.

In their nice paper [4], E. Yang and L. Yin introduced the concept of a “modular” connection on \mathbb{H} and showed that ∂_k can be obtained from the unique holomorphic Γ_1 -modular connection on \mathbb{H} . Furthermore, they generalized the latter notion to the Siegel upper half-space \mathbb{H}_g of arbitrary genus $g \geq 1$ (using the $\mathrm{Sp}_g(\mathbb{R})$ -invariant metric on \mathbb{H}_g). Let $\Gamma \subset \Gamma_g := \mathrm{Sp}_g(\mathbb{Z})$ be a congruence subgroup. Then they showed that any symmetric matrix G of size g of smooth functions on \mathbb{H}_g with values in \mathbb{C} satisfying a certain transformation law under Γ gives rise to a Γ -modular connection and therefore – as follows from their theory – to a derivative sending \mathcal{C}^∞ -Siegel modular forms of weight k on Γ to \mathcal{C}^∞ -Siegel modular forms of weight $gk + 2$ on Γ .

Received October 31, 2017; Accepted May 2, 2018.

2010 *Mathematics Subject Classification.* 11F46, 70G45.

Key words and phrases. Siegel modular forms, holomorphic derivatives.

Supported by a research fellowship (Forschungsstipendium) of the DFG, Eric Hofmann.

We will recall some of the details in Section 2. The natural question then is if a holomorphic function G with the required properties exists which then would lead to a derivative preserving holomorphicity.

In this short note, we give a quick proof that the answer to the above question is negative. The idea, roughly speaking, is the following. We will first use Witt operators (i.e., restrictions to the “diagonal”) to reduce the problem to the case $g = 2$. Then, exploiting the well-known transformation formula for $\Im(Z)$ ($Z \in \mathbb{H}_2$) under Γ_2 we will arrive at a vector-valued holomorphic modular form on Γ for the symmetric square representation sym^2 of $\text{GL}_2(\mathbb{C})$. However, by results proven in [2] (which directly follow from a vanishing theorem of Weissauer [3] regarding vector-valued holomorphic Siegel modular forms), such a function must be identically zero, and we obtain a contradiction. We hasten to point out that the above reasoning is more or less implicitly contained in the papers [3] by Weissauer and [1] by Klemm et al. However for our argument the (deeper) full classification of nearly holomorphic vector-valued Siegel modular forms of genus 2 as given in [2] and in [1] for arbitrary genus is not needed.

2. Holomorphic derivatives and statement of result

Recall that the Siegel upper half-plane of genus g is given by

$$\mathbb{H}_g = \{Z \in \text{M}_g(\mathbb{C}) \mid Z' = Z, \Im(Z) > 0\},$$

wherein Z' denotes the transpose of the matrix Z . We denote the components of $Z \in \mathbb{H}_g$ by $Z_{\mu\nu}$ ($1 \leq \mu, \nu \leq g$). The real symplectic group $\text{Sp}_g(\mathbb{R}) \subset \text{GL}_{2g}(\mathbb{R})$ operates on \mathbb{H}_g in the usual manner by

$$Z \mapsto \gamma \circ Z = (AZ + B)(CZ + D)^{-1},$$

where $\gamma = \begin{pmatrix} A & B \\ C & D \end{pmatrix} \in \text{Sp}_g(\mathbb{R})$. We let $\Gamma_g = \text{Sp}_g(\mathbb{Z})$ be the Siegel modular group and denote by $\Gamma \subset \Gamma_g$ a congruence subgroup.

Let G be a symmetric matrix of size g of \mathcal{C}^∞ -functions on \mathbb{H}_g with values in \mathbb{C} satisfying the transformation law

$$(1) \quad (CZ + D)^{-1} G(\gamma \circ Z) = G(Z) (CZ + D)' + 2C^t \quad (Z \in \mathbb{H}_g)$$

for all $\gamma = \begin{pmatrix} A & B \\ C & D \end{pmatrix} \in \Gamma$. Let f be a \mathcal{C}^∞ -Siegel modular form of weight k on Γ . Then, according to [4] the function

$$\det \left(\left[\frac{\partial}{\partial Z} - \frac{k}{2} G \right] f \right)$$

is a \mathcal{C}^∞ -Siegel modular form of weight $gk+2$ on Γ . Here $\frac{\partial}{\partial Z}$ is the matrix whose components on the diagonal are $\frac{\partial}{\partial Z_{\mu\mu}}$ and those off the diagonal are $\frac{1}{2} \frac{\partial}{\partial Z_{\mu\nu}}$. Furthermore, the notation Gf means the matrix whose general component is $G_{\mu\nu}f$ ($1 \leq \mu, \nu \leq g$).

We shall prove:

Theorem. *If $g \geq 2$, there is no holomorphic symmetric matrix G of size g satisfying (1).*

Remark. As is easy to see [4, Lemma 5] if $g = 1$, the function $\frac{i\pi}{3}P$ is the unique holomorphic function G satisfying (1). Note that in [4] there is a typo regarding the appropriate normalization of the Eisenstein series of weight 2.

3. Proof of Theorem

We will first reduce to the case $g = 2$, by restricting to the diagonal and using induction. This process is of course well-known, however for the reader's convenience we will carry out some details. We note that a similar reduction process is used in [1], however in the language of Fourier-Jacobi expansions.

Suppose that a holomorphic matrix G in genus $g \geq 2$ satisfying (1) exists. We will then show that such a matrix also exists in genus $g - 1$.

To be precise, decompose $Z \in \mathbb{H}_g$ as $Z = \begin{pmatrix} z & \zeta \\ \zeta' & \tau \end{pmatrix}$ with $z \in \mathbb{H}_{g-1}$, $\tau \in \mathbb{H}$, $\zeta' \in \mathbb{C}^{g-1}$ and put $\zeta' = (0, \dots, 0)$. Accordingly, we write the matrix G in the form

$$G(Z) = \begin{pmatrix} G_1(Z) & G_2(Z) \\ G_2'(Z) & G_4(Z) \end{pmatrix},$$

with $G_4(Z)$ a holomorphic function on \mathbb{H}_g , $G_1(Z)$ a symmetric $(g-1, g-1)$ -matrix of holomorphic functions and $G_2(Z)$ a column vector of such functions.

Now, we consider the action of elements $\gamma \in \Gamma_g$ of the form

$$\gamma = \begin{pmatrix} \tilde{A} & \tilde{B} \\ \tilde{C} & \tilde{D} \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} A & B & & \\ & 1 & & 0 \\ C & & D & \\ & 0 & & 1 \end{pmatrix}, \quad \text{with } \delta := \begin{pmatrix} A & B \\ C & D \end{pmatrix} \in \Gamma_{g-1},$$

and where all omitted entries are zeros. Immediately, we have:

$$\begin{aligned} \tilde{C}Z + \tilde{D} &= \begin{pmatrix} Cz + D & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \quad \text{and} \\ (\tilde{A}Z + \tilde{B})(\tilde{C}Z + \tilde{D})^{-1} &= \begin{pmatrix} (Az + B)(Cz + D)^{-1} & 0 \\ 0 & \tau \end{pmatrix}. \end{aligned}$$

Thus, from (1), we get

$$\begin{aligned} &\begin{pmatrix} (Cz + D)^{-1} & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} G_1(\gamma \circ Z) & G_2(\gamma \circ Z) \\ G_2(\gamma \circ Z)' & G_4(\gamma \circ Z) \end{pmatrix} \\ &= \begin{pmatrix} G_1(Z) & G_2(Z) \\ G_2(Z)' & G_4(Z) \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} (Cz + D)' & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} + 2 \begin{pmatrix} C' & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}. \end{aligned}$$

By inspecting the upper left blocks, we find that for any $\tau \in \mathbb{H}$, and any $z \in \mathbb{H}_{g-1}$,

$$(Cz + D)^{-1}G_1 \begin{pmatrix} \delta \circ z & \\ & \tau \end{pmatrix} = G_1 \begin{pmatrix} z & \\ & \tau \end{pmatrix} (Cz + D)^t + 2C'.$$

Since $\delta = \begin{pmatrix} A & B \\ C & D \end{pmatrix}$ is an arbitrary element in Γ_{g-1} , we conclude that for fixed τ , the function $G_1 \begin{pmatrix} z & \\ & \tau \end{pmatrix}$, viewed as a (matrix-valued) function on \mathbb{H}_{g-1} satisfies

(1), with g replaced by $g - 1$. Further, for fixed τ , the entries of $G_1(z_\tau)$ are holomorphic functions in $z \in \mathbb{H}_{g-1}$.

By induction, we see that if a holomorphic function on \mathbb{H}_g with $g \geq 2$ satisfying (1) exists, then there also must be such a function G on \mathbb{H}_2 .

Now, recall the well-known transformation formula

$$\Im(\gamma \circ Z) = (CZ + D)^{-1} \Im(Z) (CZ + D)^{-1'} \quad (z \in \mathbb{H}_2, \gamma = \begin{pmatrix} A & B \\ C & D \end{pmatrix} \in \Gamma_2),$$

from which we immediately deduce that

$$(2) \quad (CZ + D)^{-1} i \Im(\gamma \circ Z)^{-1} = i \Im(Z)^{-1} (CZ + D)' + 2C',$$

see e.g. [4, Lemma 9]. Define

$$F(Z) := G(Z) - i \Im(Z)^{-1} \quad (Z \in \mathbb{H}_2).$$

Then F is a $(2, 2)$ -matrix of nearly holomorphic functions, as its entries are polynomials in the entries of $\Im(Z)^{-1}$ with holomorphic coefficients. Also, as follows from (1) and (2) we have

$$F(\gamma \circ Z) = (CZ + D) F(Z) (CZ + D)'$$

for all $\gamma = \begin{pmatrix} A & B \\ C & D \end{pmatrix} \in \Gamma$. Thus F is a nearly holomorphic vector-valued modular form for Γ with respect to the representation sym^2 of $\text{GL}_2(\mathbb{C})$. However, according to Lemma 4.20 (see also Lemma 4.21) and Remark 4.31 in [2], such a function must be identically zero, and we obtain a contradiction to our hypothesis that G is holomorphic. This finishes the proof of the theorem.

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ERIC HOFMANN
 DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES
 DURHAM UNIVERSITY
 SOUTH ROAD, DURHAM DH1 3LE, UNITED KINGDOM
 AND
 MATHEMATISCHES INSTITUT
 UNIVERSITÄT HEIDELBERG, IM NEUENHEIMER FELD 205
 D-69120 HEIDELBERG, GERMANY
Email address: hofmann@mathi.uni-heidelberg.de

WINFRIED KOHNEN
MATHEMATISCHES INSTITUT
UNIVERSITÄT HEIDELBERG, IM NEUENHEIMER FELD 205
D-69120 HEIDELBERG, GERMANY
Email address: `winfried@mathi.uni-heidelberg.de`